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The Late Byzantine Metropolitans of Thessalonike

GEORGE T. DENNIS

As Thessalonike was the second city of the empire, so its bishop, especially in the Palaiologan period, was, albeit not officially, the second among the hierarchs in a diminishing empire.¹ Also second, and by a notable distance, is reliable information about him and his diocese. There is nothing comparable to the Registers of the patriarchate for the fourteenth century. The sources are spotty and anecdotal. We do not even have an accurate list of the bishops of Thessalonike. Still, acknowledging these problems, one can piece together a general picture of the metropolitans of the city and their role. The confines mandated for this report, however, do not permit a detailed discussion of each pontificate. And so, this paper will focus on certain hierarchs of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, a particularly troubled period, and will conclude with some general observations, as well as some unanswered questions.

A few preliminary observations may be in order. There will be no discussion of the Zealots in the 1340s. It has been conclusively demonstrated that the so-called “Anti-Zealot Discourse” attributed to Nicholas Kabasilas Chamaëtos, once regarded as a major source, has nothing to do with the Zealots in Thessalonike.² Still, certain questions present themselves. How much of ecclesiastical politics in Thessalonike was in reality simply one aspect of the conflict between the Kantakouzenoi and the Palaiologoi? How much was it affected by the conflict between the Palaiologoi themselves, uncle and nephew? How much by the conflict between the adherents of Palamas and those opposed to him? The lines of demarcation between the various factions are not at all clear.

The Synodikon of Orthodoxy has a special section which was read in Thessalonike and which provides a list of the metropolitans of that church.³ For the end of the thirteenth century, for the fourteenth and early fifteenth we have: Ignatios, Iakovos, Ieremias, Gregory, Ignatios, Makarios, Antonios, Dorotheos, Isidore, Gabriel, Symeon, Gregory. To affix surnames and dates to the names on this list is not an easy task. L. Petit, in an article which appeared almost exactly a hundred years ago, tried to do so, with only partial success.⁴ It should be noted that this Thessalonike list does not include the well-known bish-

¹ Thessalonike ranked sixteenth in the hierarchy. Andronikos II raised it to eleventh and Andronikos III to fourth: H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), 176.

² I. Ševčenko, “Nicholas Cabasilas’ ‘Anti-Zealot’ Discourse. A Reinterpretation,” *DOP* 11 (1957): 70–171; idem, “A Postscript on Nicholas Cabasilas’ ‘Anti-Zealot’ Discourse,” *DOP* 16 (1962): 403–8; both repr. in his *Society and Intellectual Life in Late Byzantium* (London, 1981), nos. IV and VI.

³ “Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie, Édition et commentaire,” ed. J. Gouillard, *TM* 2 (1967): 1–316, esp. 114.

⁴ “Les évêques de Thessalonique,” *EO* 5 (1901–2): 90–97.

ops Gregory Palamas and Neilos Kabasilas. Instead, they are named and effusively praised in the more general, doctrinal section of the *Synodikon*.⁵

The following list represents, to the best of our knowledge, the succession of the metropolitans of Thessalonike and their dates (the *PLP* number for each one is given in square brackets). Ignatios, 1284/85–ante 1293 [8053]; Iakovos, ca. 1293–99 (previously *hegoumenos* of the Lavra on Mt. Athos) [7905]; another Iakovos, ca. 1300–ca. 1315 (from Monembasia, but possibly the same as the preceding) [7906]; Ieremias, 1315–27, from Constantinople, where he remained for some time after his installation as metropolitan) [8110]; an unnamed prelate(?); Gregory Koutales, 1332–34/36 (also from Constantinople in the service of Andronikos III) [13616]; Ignatios (perhaps surnamed Glabas), 1336–41 [4222]; Makarios, 1342–44 (*protos* of Athos and then in the service of Empress Anna in Constantinople) [16276]; Hyakinthos, 1345–46 (a native of Cyprus, he became a monk of Hodegon in Constantinople and was noted for his strong anti-Palamite stance) [29453]. The rest are better known and will be treated in greater detail: Gregory Palamas, 1347–59 [21546]; Neilos Kabasilas, 1361–63 [10102]; Antonios, ca. 1363–ca. 1371 (?) [1100]; Dorotheos Blates, 1371–79 [2818]; Isidore Glabas, 1380–96 [4223]; Gabriel, 1397–1416/17 [3416]; Symeon (1416/17–1429) [27057]; Gregory, ca. 1432–ca. 1437/38 [4559]; Methodios, ca. 1439–67 [17599].

Gregory Palamas is best known for his theological and ascetical writings, which we need not discuss here.⁶ We are interested, rather, in his activities as archbishop of Thessalonike. For this we must rely on a very laudatory and lengthy encomium composed by his disciple Philotheos.⁷ Born in 1296, Palamas grew up in Constantinople where Emperor Andronikos II provided for his education. In 1317 he made his monastic profession at the Lavra on Mount Athos. Frequent Turkish raids on the peninsula, though, led him to spend ten years in the capital. There he joined the entourage of John Kantakouzenos and was persecuted and excommunicated by Patriarch John Kalekas. But, with the victory of the usurper, in 1347, he was rewarded with the metropolitan throne of Thessalonike, although he was unable to take possession of his see until the city yielded to Kantakouzenos three years later.

As archbishop he was noted for his efforts to bring about peace and reconciliation in a very faction-ridden city and for his preaching on social justice; many of his homilies, undoubtedly polished for posterity, are still extant.⁸ Philotheos, whom there is no reason to doubt, portrays him as a very dedicated shepherd of the flock committed to him. On a voyage to Constantinople, in 1354, he was captured by Turkish pirates and spent a year in captivity, devoting himself to the spiritual needs of other captives. Freed and back in Thessalonike, he resumed his pastoral activities, but by 1358 had become seriously ill. He died the next year (14 November 1359), and he was declared a saint of the Orthodox Church in 1368.

Neilos Kabasilas, whose baptismal name was probably Nicholas (thus explaining the previous confusion with his nephew, Nicholas Kabasilas Chamaëtos), was highly regarded as a theologian and teacher, counting among his students his nephew Nicholas and

⁵ "Synodikon," 89–91.

⁶ See J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* (Paris, 1959).

⁷ PG 151: 551–656.

⁸ PG 151: 9–549.

Demetrios Kydones.⁹ Still a layman, he was a candidate for patriarch in 1353.¹⁰ Very close to John Kantakouzenos, he probably joined him in becoming a monk in December 1354.¹¹ Patriarchal documents of 1361 mention the hieromonk Neilos Kabasilas as metropolitan-elect of Thessalonike.¹² We do not know when, or even whether, he received episcopal consecration or whether he actually arrived in Thessalonike to take possession of his see.¹³ He seems to have died in 1363.

Dorotheos, surnamed Blates, was a disciple of Palamas. About 1360, together with his brother Mark, he founded the Pantokrator monastery, generally known as Blatadon, a monastic foundation in Thessalonike functioning continuously from Byzantine times.¹⁴ The Synodikon gives him high praise for his unswerving adherence to patristic and spiritual exegesis and teaching (clearly code for Palamite), before becoming bishop and after, as well as for enduring labors and suffering, including prison, on behalf of that teaching. He seems to have occupied the metropolitan throne from 1371 to 1379.¹⁵

Isidore Glabas, whose baptismal name was John, was born to a prominent Constantinopolitan family in 1342 and received an excellent education in the Byzantine tradition.¹⁶ He became a monk on 1 April 1375. Five years later (25 May 1380) he was ordained metropolitan of Thessalonike, but remained in the capital for another month or two. Arrived in his see, in 1381–82, for reasons that are not clear he suspended Dorotheos, *hegoumenos* of St. Basil, and a priest named Allelouias. They appealed to Patriarch Neilos, who listened to their side of the case. When Isidore protested against what he regarded as interference in his diocese, Neilos justified his actions, stressing the rights of the patriarch, in July 1382.

With the city under siege by the Turks, Isidore preached a number of homilies in which he maintained that the sufferings of his flock were the result of their sins; if only they would repent and change their ways, St. Demetrios would intercede for them and God would free them from their afflictions, both present and threatening. Most serious of those sins which so angered God was the secularization of church property by the authorities. In a homily delivered in October 1383, he raised the case of the property of St. Sozon (otherwise unknown) belonging to the archdiocese, which “some high-ranking dignitaries” wanted to drag off to other uses.¹⁷ He did not directly blame the emperor, who may well have been

⁹ See *The Letters of Manuel II Palaeologus*, ed. G. T. Dennis, CFHB 8 (Washington, D.C., 1977), xxxi, xxxvi.

¹⁰ *Ioannis Cantacuzeni imperatoris historiarum libri IV*, ed. J. Schopen, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1828–32), 4.38: vol. 3, p. 275.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.42: vol. 3, pp. 306–7.

¹² MM 1: nos. 181, 183, pp. 417, 429.

¹³ According to Sphrantzes, Neilos’ sister (Nicholas’ mother) moved to Thessalonike “because her brother was archbishop there”: *Georgios Sphrantzes Memorii 1401–1471*, ed. V. Grecu (Bucharest, 1966), 18.1–2, p. 32.

¹⁴ R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 356–58; G. Theocharides, “Οἱ ἱδρυταὶ τῆς ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ μονῆς τῶν Βλατάδων,” *Παναγυρικὸς Τόμος . . . Γρηγορίου τοῦ Παλαμᾶ* (Thessalonike, 1960), 49–70. The present monastery of St. Theodora also goes back to Byzantine times, although not in its original buildings: see Janin, *Grands centres*, 374–75.

¹⁵ In June 1376 he presided over a trial in Thessalonike: G. Theocharides, *Μία διαθήκη καὶ μία δίκη βυζαντινὴ* (Thessalonike, 1962), 49.

¹⁶ See G. T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessalonica, 1382–1387*, OCA 159 (Rome, 1960), 89–95; V. Christophorides, “Ο ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης Ἰσιδώρος Γλαβάς καὶ τὰ κοινωνικὰ προβλήματα τῆς εποχῆς του,” *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρίδα τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 29 (1988): 519–90.

¹⁷ Dennis, *Reign*, 89. His homilies are extant in two collections, one in Vaticanus gr. 651; thirteen of these have been edited by V. Christophorides, *Ἰσιδώρου Γλαβᾶ ὁμιλίαι* (Thessalonike, 1992). The other is in Parisinus gr. 1192. Five of his homilies on St. Demetrios have been edited by B. Laourdas, *Ἰσιδώρου ἀρχιεπισκόπου*

present in the church, but “certain men” who were trying to persuade him to alienate church property to provide for the defense of the city. Manuel, at any rate, did not need much persuading; he had confiscated church property in 1369 and 1371 and would do so again in 1390.

In the last line of that homily, Isidore hinted at his eventual departure from Thessalonike. In fact, he had not kept his plans secret, for rumors had reached Constantinople, and the patriarch wrote to dissuade him. Isidore paid no heed, and, in spring 1384, sailed for the capital. Further letters of the patriarch advising him to return were of no avail. Finally, in September 1384, the patriarch and the synod suspended the metropolitan of Thessalonike from his functions for having abandoned the flock committed to him. “When those Christians were struggling for their lives, you fled and betrayed them.”¹⁸

What motivated Isidore to flee from the besieged city? It may well have been fear for his own safety. Christian bishops were in fact harshly treated by the conquering Ottoman forces. The sufferings of Bishop Matthew of Serres at the hands of the Turks the previous year might presage Isidore’s own fate were he to be taken prisoner.¹⁹ There may also have been other motives, such as escaping the hardships imposed by the siege. He may have been frustrated by the dispute over church property, to which he alluded in his sermons, or by the hostility of the *archontes* or of the emperor’s advisors. Did he choose to leave because of a conflict with Manuel himself, either over the confiscation of church property or over the emperor’s negotiations with the pope and the possibility of union with the Latin Church? Or, finally, could he have been on a secret mission from Manuel to discuss a settlement with John V?

Whatever his motives, the bitter reaction of the faithful was articulated by Dositheos Karantenos, a priest in Thessalonike, in a letter to Isidore. Dated 14 July 1385, it did not arrive in the capital until 12 September. Two days later, Isidore composed his reply to Dositheos as well as a pastoral letter to the Thessalonians.²⁰ He apologized for his absence which, so he asserted, had been prolonged against his will; he declared his undiminished affection for them and promised to return soon. He exhorted them to obey Emperor Manuel, their only hope of escaping the terrible dangers now confronting them. To Dositheos he offered proof that he was being detained in the capital against his will: he procured provisions at considerable expense, which his brother conveyed to Thessalonike; he had to obtain official documents from the rulers permitting him to return to his see. He was obliged to spend a great deal of time at the palace, especially “when he bearing the second position of authority after the great one entered Constantinople.”²¹ Many points in this apology remain obscure, and any attempt to solve them will lead us far afield.

In any event, Isidore was restored to his position as metropolitan; in March 1386 he

Θεσσαλονίκης όμιλία εις τας έορτάς του άγιου Δημητρίου, Έλληνικά, Παράρτημα 5 (Thessalonike, 1954), and another five by A. C. Hero in her M.A. thesis, Columbia University, 1965.

¹⁸ Dennis, *Reign*, 92. Such episcopal flights before the Turkish advance were not uncommon in the 14th century. In 1304–5 Patriarch Athanasios complained to the emperor about the large number of bishops who had abandoned their flocks and fled to Constantinople: *The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople*, ed. A. M. Talbot (Washington, D.C., 1975), letter 25, p. 56.

¹⁹ He clearly alluded to this in some of his sermons: see Christophorides, “Ο άρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης,” 558–59.

²⁰ Dennis, *Reign*, 92.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 93.

reappears as a member of the patriarchal synod. But, despite his repeated promises, he did not return to Thessalonike until after it was captured by the Turks, late, so it seems, in 1389. Sometime in the next few years he undertook the arduous journey to the Ottoman Porte, in Asia Minor, to plead for better conditions for the Thessalonians captured by the Turks as well as for those remaining in the occupied city.²² He seems to have achieved some success for, back in Thessalonike, in his homilies for the Sundays before the feast of St. Demetrios, in October 1393, he exhorted the congregation to be grateful to God for a definite, but unspecified, remission of their sufferings. Two years later, however, he had to try to console them as the Turks imposed the barbaric *devshirme*, or child tribute, upon them.²³ Not long afterwards he died, on 11 January 1396.

Gabriel was the son of a priest, a diocesan official in Thessalonike. At an early age he entered monastic life and came under the direction of Makarios Choumnos in what was known simply as the Nea Mone (new monastery) in Thessalonike.²⁴ About 1374 Makarios was named *hegoumenos* of Stoudios in Constantinople, and he designated Gabriel as superior of the Nea Mone. But, in 1384, with the Turks besieging the city, he and several other monks left for Constantinople, where they settled in what Demetrios Kydones referred to as the “Neotera Mone” (newer monastery). But Gabriel was soon named superior of Chora and overseer of all the monasteries in the capital. In April 1389 he was promoted to metropolitan of Chalcedon, then occupied by the Turks and thus inaccessible to the metropolitan-elect. But the bishopric of Chalcedon possessed a good deal of property in Constantinople, which brought Gabriel into direct conflict with Matthew, bishop of Kyzikos, and which would not be forgotten when Matthew ascended the patriarchal throne.

Sometime before 1394 Gabriel returned to his native city and again took up his position as superior of the Nea Mone. The death of Isidore Glabas (1396) was followed by a conflict over the succession which ended in the summer of 1397 with the election of Gabriel. He was remembered for expending a great deal of energy and money in obtaining milder treatment of his flock from the Turks. Some sixty-six homilies of his are extant, mostly unedited, which cover the liturgical year and special feasts.²⁵

Thessalonike was restored to Byzantine rule in the summer of 1402. The Synodikon has a great deal of praise for Gabriel, but the rest of the historical record shows him embroiled in a series of ecclesiastical controversies. A dispute with the monks of Akapniou degenerated to such a point that the patriarch threatened Gabriel with excommunication. Gabriel himself, in conflict with the patriarchal exarch Nathaniel, excommunicated the monks of Kyr Maximos. The long-standing hostility between Gabriel and Matthew of Kyzikos, since 1397 ecumenical patriarch, erupted again when Emperor Manuel II sailed

²² These journeys are alluded to in the Synodikon entry and in the monody on Isidore by Constantine Ivankos, ed. E. Legrand, *Lettres de l'empereur Manuel Paléologue* (Paris, 1893), 105–8.

²³ S. Vryonis, “Isidore Glabas and the Turkish Devshirme,” *Speculum* 31 (1956): 433–43.

²⁴ On Gabriel see Dennis, *Letters of Manuel*, xlii–xliv. A memorial oration by Makarios Makres focuses on Gabriel's holiness but also contains much biographical information: ed. L. Syndika-Laourdas, *Μακεδονικά* 4 (1955–60): 352–70; more recent ed. with commentary by A. Argyrios, *Μακαρίου τοῦ Μακρῆ συγγράμματα* (Thessalonike, 1996), 101–20. On the Nea Mone see Janin, *Grands centres*, 398–99; also *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, ed. J. Thomas and A. C. Hero, 5 vols. (Washington, D.C., 2000), no. 52, 4: 1433–54, esp. 1433.

²⁵ They exist in cod. 58 of the Theological School of Chalki: see A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche*, TU 52.5 (Leipzig, 1943), 714–17. Seven have been edited by B. Laourdas, “Γαβριήλ Θεσσαλονίκης ὁμίλια,” *Ἄθηνα* 57 (1953): 141–78.

for western Europe, leaving the capital to be governed by his nephew John VII, and in June 1403 Gabriel took his revenge by voting to depose the patriarch.²⁶ Peace between the bishops of Thessalonike and Constantinople seems to have been restored only with Patriarch Euthymios, 1410–16.

Still, despite his voting against Patriarch Matthew and, at least implicitly, his support of John VII, Gabriel enjoyed a long friendship with Manuel II; they shared literary interests, and two of the letters which the emperor wanted preserved for posterity were addressed to Gabriel.²⁷ He died in 1416–17.

Here a note on John VII Palaiologos may not be out of place. In the summer of 1403 Manuel II returned from western Europe to reign again as emperor in Constantinople, and his nephew John sailed off to reign as emperor in Thessalonike. An entry in the Synodikon of that city, apparently composed by Metropolitan Symeon, had high praise for John.²⁸ “He conducted himself in a truly orthodox manner through his entire life. He was an outstanding defender of the church and its sacred doctrines. . . . When waves of unheard-of violence rose up and threatened to engulf everything, he did not yield, but like a good pilot he again took control for the Romans. He recovered several cities from the hands of the barbarians, of which the first and greatest was our own Thessalonike, seeing the light of freedom after long servitude. He established his residence in our city and, neglecting nothing that was needed, he employed all means to assure our safety. He also gained many victories and triumphs over his own sufferings; the great variety of illnesses which he bore caused him to progress in virtue.” His accomplishments and saintly life are also recalled in other sources, notably in the monody composed by Theodore Potamios.²⁹ It almost seems as though a cult of John was developing.

Symeon, a native of Constantinople, became a monk, perhaps in the monastery of the Xanthopouloi, and was ordained a priest.³⁰ He came to serve as a spiritual father, and he was also very knowledgeable about the rituals of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople. The spiritual father of Manuel II was also a monk of Xanthopouloi, and it may have been in that context that he came to know Symeon, who, for his part, held the emperor in the highest regard. He is credited with having inserted special praise of Manuel in the Synodikon read in Thessalonike, which recalled his wisdom, bravery, constancy of character, military qualities, distant voyages, and incredible hardships undergone for the common good. “His great virtues shone upon the whole world more than any Orthodox emperor in the past.”³¹ Symeon also composed a personal but very informative history of events in Thessalonike from 1387 to 1422.³² He is best known, however, for his detailed writings on the liturgy, as though he foresaw that its continued and correct observance would have to sustain the Christian people during four centuries of infidel oppression.³³

²⁶ G. T. Dennis, “The Deposition and Restoration of Patriarch Matthew I, 1402–1404,” *ByzF* 2 (1967): 100–106, esp. 104 note 19; repr. in G. T. Dennis, *Byzantium and the Franks 1350–1420* (London, 1982), no. IV.

²⁷ *Letters of Manuel*, 52 and 57.

²⁸ “Synodikon,” 99.

²⁹ Ed. S. Lampros, *Δεστ. Έτ. Έλλ.* 2 (1885): 48–62.

³⁰ See D. Balfour, ed., *Politico-Historical Works of Symeon, Archbishop of Thessalonica (1416/17 to 1429)* (Vienna, 1979).

³¹ “Synodikon,” 101.

³² Ed. Balfour, *Works of Symeon*, 40–69.

³³ PG 155: 176–817; I. M. Phountoules, *Τὸ λειτουργικὸν ἔργον Συμεὼν τοῦ Θεσσαλονίκης* (Thessalonike, 1966).

Symeon claimed that he did not want to be a bishop but was “obliged” to receive ordination. At some point in the years 1416–17, he left the capital in a hurry, and arrived in Thessalonike alone, where, so he said, he did not know anyone.³⁴ In fact, almost every year he requested to return to Constantinople. And, in a time of crisis (1422–23), he did attempt to go back there but got only as far as Mount Athos and was forced to return to Thessalonike. He claimed that he was compelled to remain there against his will. As Turkish pressure on the city increased, he had to contend against those who wanted to surrender to the Turks and at the same time against those who wanted to call in the Venetians. He was strongly anti-Muslim and, being hesychast, almost as strongly anti-Latin; in the negotiations with Venice he insisted on a clause safeguarding the position of the Orthodox bishop and clergy.

Symeon was, of course, concerned with the administration of the church, including the recruitment of suitable priests. But he was also much involved with civic duties such as advising the city’s governor and presiding over civil tribunals. He admits that he alienated many because of his integrity and impartiality. In fact, he claimed to have been buffeted by everybody, reviled by his own household, and generally treated as dirt. In addition to all that, he tells us that, in 1427–28, his already weak constitution cracked under the strain of his labors and sorrows; he fell seriously ill and felt as though “he was nailed to his bed like a corpse.”³⁵ He died suddenly in autumn 1429.

Apparently, there was no archbishop in office when the troops of Murad II charged into the city on 29 March 1430, but within two years a new metropolitan was chosen. This was Gregory, a prominent member of the local clergy, who had served as bishop of a nearby diocese, whose name we do not know, and who, around 1432, was transferred to the metropolitan see of Thessalonike.³⁶ He is the last prelate listed in the Synodikon for that city and was remembered for doing all he could to sustain his flock in difficult times. We last hear of him in 1437.

In the first half of 1439, Methodios appears as metropolitan. Very little is known about him except that he seems to have resided in Thessalonike, for Emperor John VIII believed that he would not be able to come to Constantinople for a proposed synod.³⁷ He was still in office on 15 January 1467, when he signed a decree deposing a certain Mark Xylkarabes.³⁸ It is not clear when his pontificate came to an end.

While the limited evidence summarized above may allow us to draw some conclusions about the late Byzantine metropolitans of Thessalonike, there remain many obscurities, both about individual hierarchs and more general matters. How was the metropolitan chosen? Much like the ecumenical patriarch, it would seem. The permanent synod probably proposed three names, and the emperor selected one, usually the first, which, in one way or another, he would have already suggested to the assembled bishops. Whatever the

³⁴ On the date see Balfour, *Works of Symeon*, 137.

³⁵ *Works of Symeon*, 54.3.

³⁶ “Synodikon,” 115. In general see A. Glavinas, “Οἱ πρῶτοι κατὰ τὴν τουρκοκρατείαν μητροπολίται Θεσσαλονίκης,” *Επιστημονικὴ Επετηρίδα τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς* 23 (1978): 331–45; V. Laurent, “La liste épiscopale de Thessalonique,” *EO* 32 (1933): 300–10.

³⁷ *Les mémoires du grand ecclésiarque de l’église de Constantinople Silvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence (1438–1439)*, ed. V. Laurent (Paris, 1971), 12, 17, 29–33, pp. 570–72. For letters written by him in 1452 and 1453, see J. Darrouzès, “Lettres de 1453,” *REB* 22 (1964): 119.

³⁸ Cf. Glavinas, “Οἱ πρῶτοι”; *PLP* 17599.

formalities observed, it was often the emperor who appointed the metropolitan. Thus John Kantakouzenos rewarded his supporters, Palamas and Kabasilas. Isidore's connection with the emperor is not clear, but he belonged to a prominent family in the capital and spent many years there. Gabriel also resided there for a long time and was, as we know, a friend of Manuel II. Symeon was a native of Constantinople and quite likely a monk of Xanthopouloi, to which the emperor went for spiritual direction.

We possess allusions to but very little documentation about the administration of the diocese, about its officials, the chartophylax, the musical director, the administrator of the orphanage, and about such matters as church property and philanthropic institutions. Most probably, it reflected, on a smaller scale, that of the patriarchate.³⁹ The city contained many *metochia* and other properties belonging to Athonite monasteries, as well as religious houses of its own. In the fourteenth century the metropolitan was entitled "humble" (*tapeinos*), "most honorable" (*hypertimos*), and "exarch of All Thessalia." During the reign of John VI Kantakouzenos he received the privilege, when addressing the faithful in his own jurisdiction, of adding the title, hitherto reserved to the patriarch, ἡμετριότης ἡμῶν, "our moderacy," "our modest self."⁴⁰

The sources make it clear that the bishops of Thessalonike, whatever their political involvement, were genuinely devoted to their pastoral responsibilities. One would expect to hear this from the encomia in the Synodikon, but their homilies which have been preserved confirm the same judgment. Although their high Greek style—if indeed they were delivered in the form in which they have been transmitted—may have been above the comprehension of their congregations, the homilies manifest a genuine awareness of the religious needs and problems of the Thessalonians and a sense of the bishops' own responsibility to provide pastoral guidance. Symeon's insistence on appointing suitable priests and on correct liturgical observance is another facet of the same concern.

Like their counterparts in Constantinople, the bishops of Thessalonike played a prominent role in civic affairs. They were involved in the secular courts of law and presided over trials. Symeon, in particular, complained that his civic responsibilities consumed a great deal of his time and energy and earned him many enemies. In 1336, moreover, a trial was postponed because the see was vacant and there was no archbishop to preside.⁴¹ Forty years later (June 1376) Bishop Dorotheos is recorded as being the presiding judge in a civil trial.⁴² The bishops also had to oversee the many philanthropic institutions which characterized Byzantine urban life. They served as counselors to the secular authority, whether it was the emperor's son bearing the title "despot of the Romans," acting as governor of the city, or the emperor himself. And, of course, in the years under Turkish occupation the responsibilities of the metropolitans increased greatly. Isidore and Gabriel went on long and dangerous journeys to obtain relief for the Thessalonians; they had to raise funds to placate the occupying forces and, at times, to obtain provisions for the less affluent members of their flocks. They ran into conflicts with the civil authorities serving under the Turks. They had to be discreet in warning the Christians about becoming too

³⁹ J. Darrouzès, *Recherches sur les ὀφφίκτια de l'église byzantine* (Paris, 1970), 117–18.

⁴⁰ Darrouzès, "Lettres de 1453," 72–127, esp. 106.

⁴¹ *Das Register des Patriarchats von Konstantinopel*, ed. H. Hunger et al. (Vienna, 1995), no. 3, pp. 104–17, esp. 110.

⁴² Theocharides, *Μία διαθήκη*, 49.

friendly with their Muslim overlords, and they had to deal with those who had themselves gone over to Islam.

Thessalonike was torn by factionalism and civil strife in the period under consideration. Its bishops were constantly urging its citizens to put aside their differences and to join forces against their real enemies. Their sermons are full of references to social injustice and class struggle. Why do we hear more about such matters in Thessalonike rather than in other cities? Why at this period in its history? One might also ask about the role of Palamism. How divisive was it? Was it mostly a theological or ascetical controversy, or did it have an effect on the lives of ordinary Christians? What was its real impact on politics, local and imperial?

In all this there are several unexplained relationships. Theodore Potamios, for instance, was a lifelong friend of Isidore Glabas and, at the same time, a good friend of Demetrios Kydones, both of whom were bitterly opposed to each other. Gabriel supported John VII, yet remained a friend of Manuel II. The Xanthopouloi monks gave spiritual direction to anti-Latin hesychasts such as Isidore, yet, at the same time, also transcribed the pro-Latin writings of Kydones and Manuel Kalekas.⁴³ Many other such paradoxical relationships could easily be adduced. There was at the top of Byzantine society a certain elite which was based, not on wealth, religious status, or nobility of birth, but on a shared rhetorical and literary education, the “communion of letters” (κοινωνία λόγων), as they called it.⁴⁴ This literary brotherhood seems to have taken precedence over theological, political, and other differences.

There still remains much to learn about the metropolitans of Thessalonike and much more we shall probably never know. There is also much to learn from studying what we can of their history with all of its singularly distinctive personalities and its unexpected complexities. The story of the metropolitans of Thessalonike is truly byzantine.

Catholic University of America

⁴³ R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat œcuménique: Les églises et les monastères* (Paris, 1969), 378–79.

⁴⁴ *Démétrius Cydonès. Correspondance*, ed. R.-J. Loenertz, 2 vols., ST 186, 208 (Vatican City, 1956, 1960), letter 270, line 47: 2: 188. This has been discussed in some detail by I. Ševčenko, “Society and Intellectual Life in the Fourteenth Century,” *Actes du XIV^e Congrès international des études Byzantines, Bucarest 1971*, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1974), 7–30; repr. in his *Society and Intellectual Life*, no. 1.

Appendix

Metropolitans of Thessalonike, Late Thirteenth to Mid-Fifteenth Centuries

Ignatios, 1284/85–ante 1293
Iakovos, ca. 1293–1299
Iakovos ? ca. 1300–ca. 1315?
Jeremias, 1315–1327
An unnamed bishop?
Gregory Koutales, 1332–1334/36⁴⁵
Ignatios (Glabas), 1336–1341
Makarios, 1342–1344
Hyakinthos, 1345–1346
Gregory Palamas, 1347–1359
Neilos Kabasilas, 1361–1363
Antonios, ca. 1363–ca. 1371
Dorotheos Blates, 1371–1379
Isidore Glabas, 1380–1396
Gabriel, 1397–1416/17
Symeon, 1416/17–1429
Gregory, ca. 1432–ca. 1437/38
Methodios, ca. 1439–1467

⁴⁵ On the dates of the archbishopric of Koutales, see comments by D. Jacoby in note 279 of his article in this volume.